

University of Dundee

Melting Glaciers Annual Newsletter 2017

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Publication date:
2017

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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Citation for published version (APA):
Baxter, K. (2017). Melting Glaciers Annual Newsletter 2017.

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Yfirlit um íslenska jökla í árslok 2017

Jöklar á Íslandi hafa hopað hratt í rúma tvo áratugi og er rýrnun þeirra einhver helsta afleiðing hlýnandi loftslags hérlandis og skýr vitnisburður um hlýnunina. Hér er gerð stutt grein fyrir breytingum á jöklunum síðan um aldamótin 1900 og lýst niðurstöðum mælinga á stöðu jökulsporða, afkomu jökla og landlyftingu á síðustu árum.

Overview of Icelandic glaciers at the end of 2017

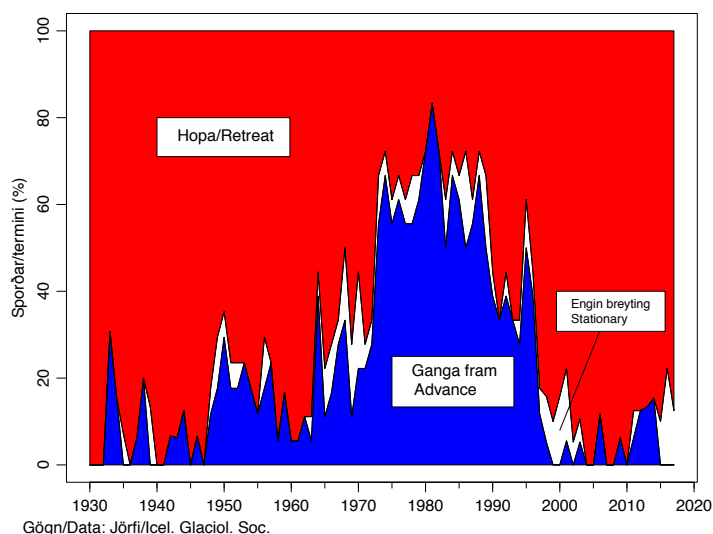
Glaciers in Iceland have retreated rapidly for more than two decades and glacier downwasting is one of the most obvious consequences of a warming climate in the country. In this newsletter, glacier changes since about 1900 will be described briefly along with the results of monitoring of glacier termini, glacier mass balance and crustal movements induced by glacier changes in recent years.

JÖKLABREYTINGAR

Flatarmál íslenskra jökla hefur minnkað um rúmlega 600 km² síðan árið 2000 og u.þ.b. 2000 km² frá lokum 19. aldar þegar jöklarnir náðu mestu útbreiðslu síðan land byggðist. Síðustu árin hefur heildarflatarmál jökla minnkað um u.þ.b. 40 km² árlega að meðaltali. Á árinu 2017 hopuðu jökulsporðar víða um tugi metra. Af þeim jöklum sem mældir eru af félögum í Jöklarannsóknafélagi Íslands hopuðu Kaldalónsjökull í Drangajökli og Hagafellsjökull eystri í Langjökli mest, eða 100–200 m. Hraðast hörfar Breiðamerkurjökull þar sem kelfir af honum í Jökulsárlón, milli 200 og 300 m árlega.

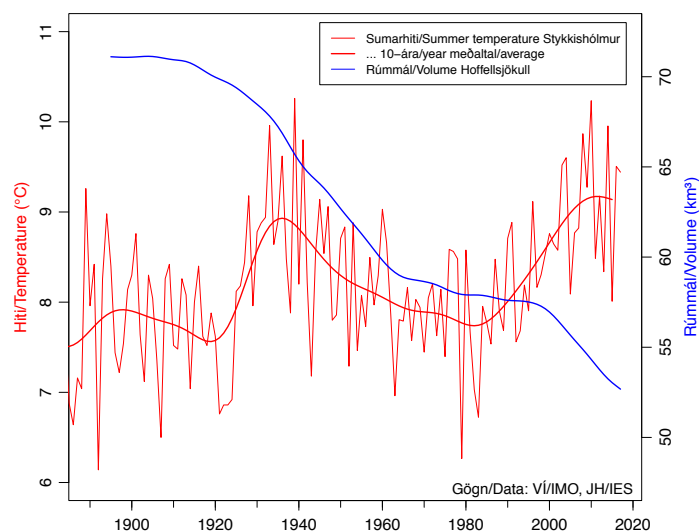
GLACIER CHANGES

Since 2000, the area of Iceland's glaciers has reduced by more than 600 km², and by ca. 2000 km² from the end of the 19th century when the glaciers reached their maximum extent since the country was settled in the 9th century CE. The glacier area has on average been reduced by ca. 40 km² annually in recent years. Glaciers typically retreated by tens of metres in 2017. Kaldalónsjökull and E-Hagafellsjökull hold the 2017 record in the terminus variations dataset of the Iceland Glaciological Society, retreating by 100–200 m in a year. The Breiðamerkurjökull outlet glacier of the Vatnajökull ice cap retreats even faster, where it calves into Jökulsárlón lagoon, with an annual rate of retreat in recent years up to 200–300 m.



Árlegt hlutfall íslenskra jökla sem gengu fram eða hopuðu á árunum 1931 til 2017. Framhlaupsjökla eru ekki taldir með. Myndin sýnir gögn frá 10 til 20 jökulsporðum fyrir flest ár.

The annual proportion of monitored non-surging Icelandic glacier termini that advanced or retreated in the period 1931 to 2017. The figure is based on data from 10 to 20 glaciers for most years.



Síðan um aldamótin 1900 hafa skipt á köld og hlý tímabil í veðurfari á Íslandi eins og sjá má á sumarhita í Stykkishólmi. Jöklar hafa minnkað hraðast á hlýjum tímaseiðum sbr. breytingar í rúmmáli Hoffellsjökuls á tímabilinu.

The climate of Iceland since 1900 has been characterized by decades-long cool and warm periods, cf. the summer temperature in Stykkishólmur W-Iceland. Glaciers have lost mass most rapidly during warm periods as seen for Hoffellsjökull, SE-Iceland.

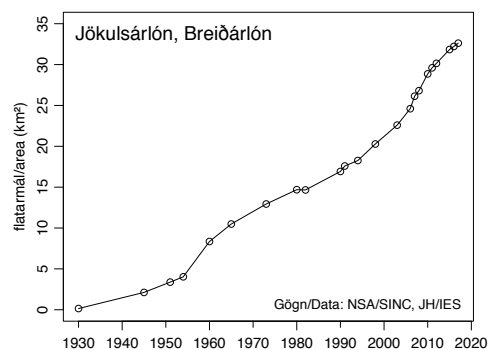
JÖKULSÁRLÓN Á BREIÐAMERKURSANDI

Við Jökulsárlón má sjá hversu mikil áhrif kelfing í sjó fram og í jökullón hefur á afkomu jökla. Jökulsárlón byrjaði að myndast um 1935. Það er nú ásamt Breiðárlóni og nokkrum öðrum minni lónum við jaðar Breiðamerkurjökuls yfir 30 km² að flatarmáli. Síðustu árin hafa lónin samtals stækkað um 0,5 – 1 km² árlega að meðaltali. Breiðamerkurjökull hörfar og þynnist bæði vegna yfirborðsleysingar í hlýnandi loftslagi og kelfingar (ís brotnar af sporðinum út í vatn eða sjó) í Jökulsárlón. Um þriðjungur massataps Breiðamerkurjökuls síðustu ár er vegna kelfingar. Hinar stóru ísbreiður Suður-skautlandsins og Grænlands tapa miklum ís við kelfingu og hefur hraði kelfingarinnar þar aukist að miklum mun á síðustu árum.



THE JÖKULSÁRLÓN GLACIER LAGOON

The Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon demonstrates how important calving into the ocean or terminal lakes can be for the mass balance of glaciers. Jökulsárlón lagoon started to form in the middle of the 1930s because of the retreat of the glacier. The lagoons by the terminus of Breiðamerkurjökull, Jökulsárlón and Breiðárlón, as well as some smaller lagoons, now have a combined area over 30 km². On average, the lagoons have grown by 0.5 – 1 km² annually in recent years. The Breiðamerkurjökull glacier retreats and thins due to negative surface mass balance in a warming climate but also due to calving (ice breaks of the front into lakes or sea) into Jökulsárlón lagoon. Calving currently causes about 1/3 of the mass loss of Breiðamerkurjökull. The large ice sheets of Antarctica and Greenland lose large amounts of ice by calving, and the rate of loss has intensified greatly in recent years.

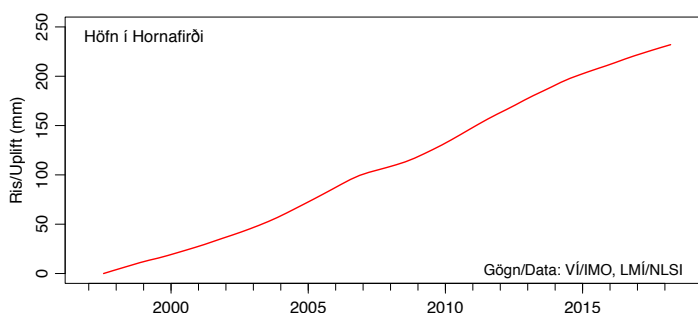


Breytingar á jaðri Breiðamerkurjökuls (t.v.) og heildarflatarmál lóna við jökuljaðarinn (að ofan) á mismunandi tímum frá lokum 19. aldar.

Changes in the ice margin of Breiðamerkurjökull outlet glacier by Jökulsárlón lagoon (left) and the total area of lakes by the ice margin (above) since the end of the 19th century.

JARÐSKORPUHREYFINGAR

Massatap jöklanna veldur hröðu landrís vegna þess hve seigja möttulefnisins undir Íslandi er lág. Við Höfn í Hornafirði er landrís nú um 12 mm á ári og hefur hraði þess aukist um u.þ.b. 50% á undanförunum tveimur áratugum. Land rís enn hraðar við vesturjaðar Vatnajökuls þar sem ríshraðinn mælist allt að 40 mm á ári.



Landhæðarbreytingar á Höfn í Hornafirði frá 1997 til vors 2018 skv. GPS-mælingum. Kortið til hægri sýnir helstu jökla landsins.

Crustal uplift measured by GPS at Höfn in Hornafjörður in SE-Iceland. The location map shows the main glaciers of Iceland as well as the location of Höfn in Hornafjörður.

CRUSTAL MOVEMENTS

Rapid melting of glacial ice leads to crustal uplift near the ice margins because of the low viscosity of the mantle under Iceland. The land at Höfn in Hornafjörður in SE-Iceland currently rises by ca. 12 mm per year and the rate has increased by ca. 50% in the last two decades. The rate of uplift is even larger near the western margin of Vatnajökull where it has been measured approximately 40 mm per year.

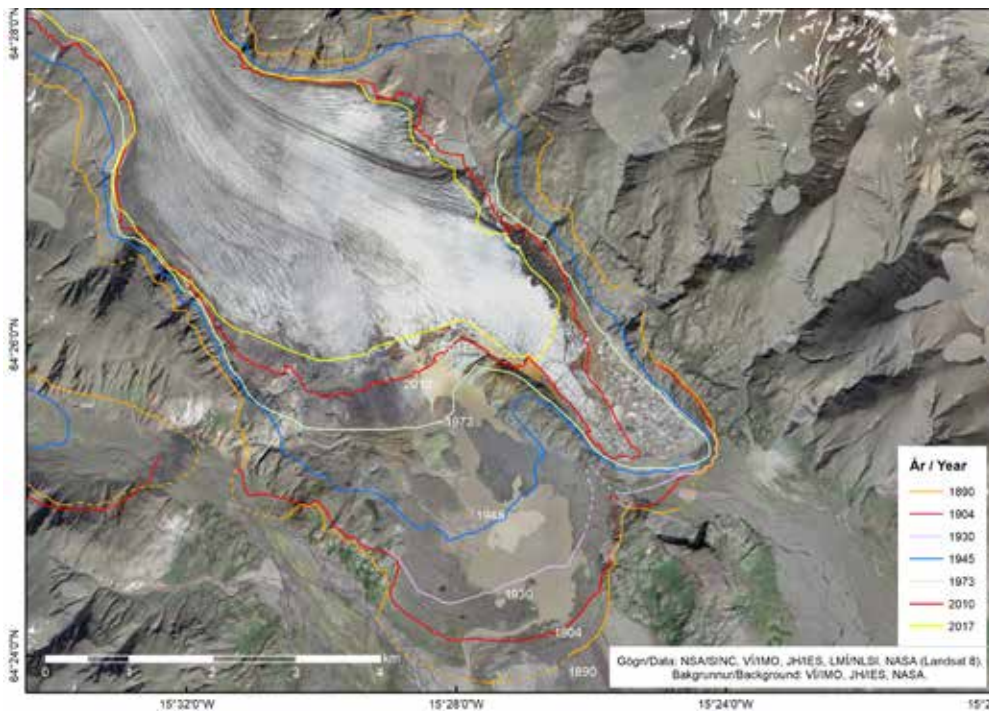


HOFFELLSJÖKULL

Hoffellsjökull í Hornafirði hefur rýrnað mikið síðan hann náði hámarksútbreiðslu undir lok 19. aldar og býður umhverfi jökulsins upp á einstætt tækifæri til þess að skoða ummerki jökuhlöfnunar frá hámarki litlu ísaldar. Hörfun jökulsins hefur leitt til myndunar lóns við sporðinn sem hefur stækkað hratt síðan það byrjaði að myndast um 2010. Flatarmál Hoffellsjökuls hefur minnkað um tæplega 40 km² síðan um aldamótin 1900 og um rúmlega 0.5 km² á ári að meðaltali síðustu árin.

THE HOFFELLSJÖKULL OUTLET GLACIER

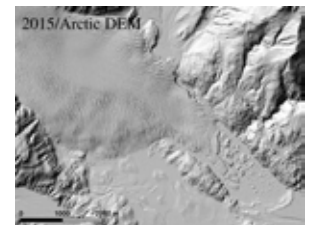
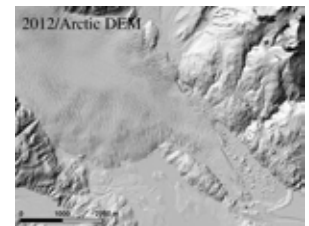
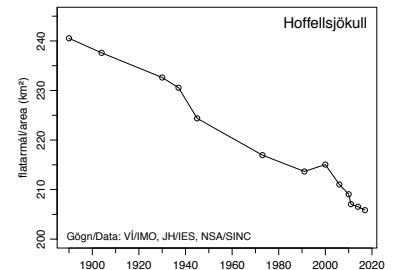
The Hoffellsjökull outlet glacier has retreated and thinned greatly since the end of the 19th century, when the glacier reached its maximum extent in recent times. The foreland of Hoffellsjökull provides unique opportunities to observe the geomorphological effects of glacier retreat. In 2010, the retreat of the glacier led to the formation of a terminus lake that has grown rapidly every year since then. The area of Hoffellsjökull has been reduced by ca. 40 km² since the end of the 19th century and by more than 0.5 km² annually in recent years.



Hörfun Hoffellsjökuls frá lokum 19. aldar. Kortið sýnir stöðu jaðarsins á mismunandi tímum og línuritið uppi t. h. rýrnandi flatarmál jökulsins. Skyggð landlíkön af jökuhlöfnunni frá 2012 og 2015 sem byggð eru á gervihnattamælingum eru sýnd til hægri.

The retreat of Hoffellsjökull outlet glacier since the end of the 19th century. The map shows the glacier margin at different points in time and the graph in the upper right shows the diminishing area of the glacier. The shadings to the right

are computed from digital terrain models of the glacier tongue from 2012 and 2015 derived from satellite images.



Flugsýn af tungu Hoffellsjökuls 1982 og 2017. Myndirnar byggja á ljósmyndum sem teknar voru úr flugvél 1982 og flygildi 2017 og landlíkönunum sem reiknuð voru á

grundvelli myndanna og sýna vel myndun jaðarlónsins og lækkun yfirborðs jökulsins á 35 ára tímabili.

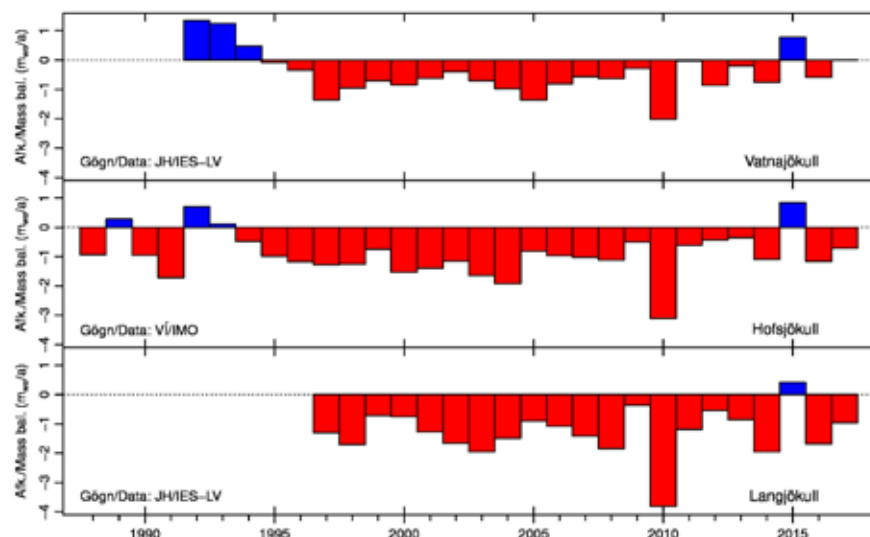


Birds eye views of the tongue of Hoffellsjökull in 1982 and 2017. The views are produced from aerial photographs taken from an aircraft in 1982 and a UAV in 2017

and show well the formation of the terminus lake and the lowering of the glacier surface over the 35 year period.

AFKOMA

Afkoma íslensku jöklanna hefur verið neikvæð síðan 1995 með einni undantekningu, afkoma ársins 2015 var jákvæð í fyrsta sinn í 20 ár. Árið 2016 mældist afkoman aftur neikvæð eins og flest undanfarin ár og einnig fyrir Langjökul og Hofsjökul árið 2017 en Vatnajökul var þá nærri því að vera í jafnvægi. Jöklarnir hafa alls tapað um 250 km³ íss síðan 1995 sem er um 7% af heildarrúmmáli þeirra.

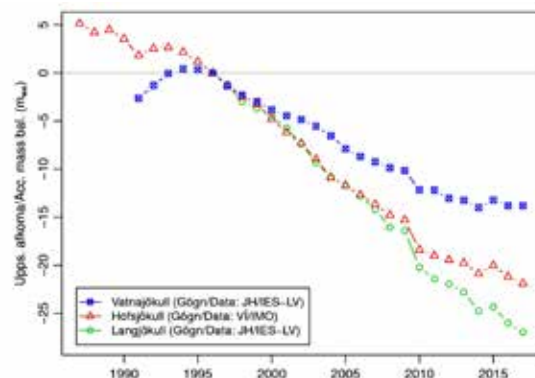


Árleg og uppsöfnuð afkoma Vatnajökuls, Hofsjökuls og Langjökuls frá upphafi mælinga á hverjum jökli samkvæmt gögnum Jarðvísindastofnunar Háskólans,

Landsvirkjunar og Veðurstofu Íslands. Þessir jöklar geyma yfir 95% af rúmmáli íss í jökulum landsins.

GLACIER MASS BALANCE

The mass balance of the Icelandic glaciers has been negative since 1995 with the exception of the year 2015 when it became positive for the first time in 20 years. The mass balance in 2016 was again negative by a similar magnitude as in recent years. The mass balance of Langjökull and Hofsjökull was again negative in 2017 whereas Vatnajökull was almost in balance. The glaciers have lost approximately 250 km³ of ice since 1995, which corresponds to ca. 7% of their total volume.



Annual and accumulated mass balance of Vatnajökull, Hofsjökull and Langjökull ice caps since the start of regular mass-balance measurements on each glacier.

These three ice caps contain >95% of the volume of ice in the glaciers of Iceland.

ALLAR ÁR Á SKEIÐARÁRSANDI HAFJA SAMEINAST

Meginjökulvötn á Skeiðarársandi hafa löngum verið talin þrjú, Skeiðará, Gígjukvísl og Súla/Núpsvötn. Skeiðará sameinaðist Gígju 2009 og Súla fylgdi svo á eftir 2016 þannig að nú falla öll vötn frá Skeiðarárjökli í einum farvegi til sjávar fyrir miðjum sandi í fyrsta sinn síðan á miðöldum. Þessi breyting, sem er af völdum hörfunar jökuljaðarsins, er einhver skýrasta birtingarmynd hlýnandi loftslags hér á landi.

MERGE OF GLACIAL RIVERS ON SKEIÐARÁRSANDUR

Three main glacial rivers have traditionally flowed from Skeiðarárjökull outlet glacier across the Skeiðarársandur plain to the ocean, Skeiðará, Gígjukvísl and Súla/Núpsvötn. Skeiðará merged with Gígjukvísl in 2009 and Súla followed in 2016. Now all runoff from Skeiðarárjökull flows in a single river in the middle of the sandur plain for the first time since the middle ages. This consequence of the retreat of the terminus provides a dramatical manifestation of the warming climate in Iceland.



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
JARÐVÍSINDASTOFNUN



Upplýsingarnar sem hér birtast eru byggðar á mælingum jöklahóps Jarðvísindastofnunar Háskólans (JH), Veðurstofu Íslands (VÍ), Landsvirkjunar (LV), Náttúrustofu Suðausturlands (NSA) og Jöklarannsóknafélags Íslands (Jörfi). Nánari upplýsingar um sporðamælingar veitir Bergur Einarsson (bergur@vedur.is), um afkomumælingar Finnur Pálsson (fp@hi.is) og Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (thor@vedur.is), um jarðskorpuhreyfingar Benedikt G. Ófeigsson (bgo@vedur.is) og um mælingar á hörfun Breiðamerkur- og Hoffellsjökli Snævarr Guðmundsson (snaevarr@natts.is). Kieran Baxter útbjó flugsýn af Hoffellsjökli.

The results presented here are based on the measurements of the glacier group of the The Institute of Earth Sciences, University of Iceland (IES), the Icelandic Meteorological Office (IMO), Landsvirkjun – the National Power Company of Iceland (LV), the Southeast Iceland Nature Centre (SINC) and the Iceland Glaciological Society (Jörfi). Further information about terminus variations are provided by Bergur Einarsson (bergur@vedur.is), about mass balance Finnur Pálsson (fp@hi.is) and Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson (thor@vedur.is), about crustal movements Benedikt G. Ófeigsson (bgo@vedur.is) and about the Breiðamerkur- og Hoffellsjökull glaciers Snævarr Guðmundsson (snaevarr@natts.is). Kieran Baxter produced the birds eye views of Hoffellsjökull.



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Hönnun/Design
Gagarín
Atli Hilmarsson

Tilvitnun/Citation

Yfirlit um íslenska jökla í árslok 2017. Fréttabréf. Veðurstofa Íslands, Jarðvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands og Náttúrustofa Suðausturlands (2018).

Overview of Icelandic glaciers at the end of 2017. Newsletter. Icelandic Meteorological Office, The Institute of Earth Sciences, University of Iceland and the Southeast Iceland Nature Centre (2018).